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Graves, Jackson Alpheus

Why I am here

[Pasadena? Calif.]

[1912?]

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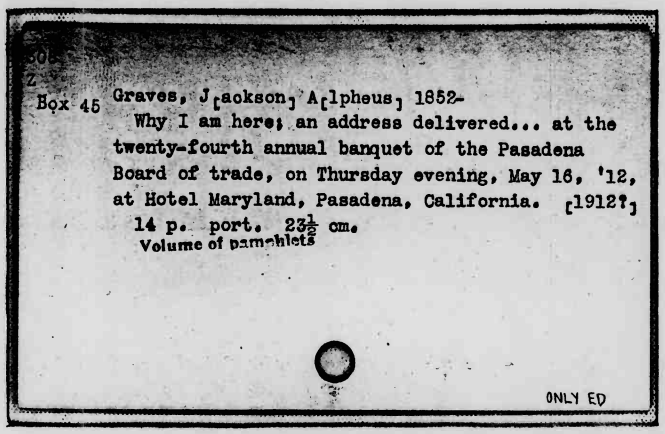
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Why I am here; an address delivered... at the twenty-fourth annual banquet of the Pasadena Board of trade, on Thursday evening, May 16, '12, at Hotel Maryland, Pasadena, California. [1912?]
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Why I Am Here.

An Address Delivered By

J. A. Graves

At The

Twenty-fourth Annual Banquet
of the Pasadena Board of Trade

On

Thursday Evening, May 16, '12
at Hotel Maryland, Pasadena, California

Why I Am Here.

By J. A. Graves

¶ Upon being introduced by the Toastmaster, Dr. John Willis Baer, Mr. Graves said:

Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen:

¶ I first saw Pasadena in the early part of June, 1875. That is why I am here. If I had not seen Pasadena then, at the proper psychological moment, I would not be here now. But thereby hangs a tale which I will to you unfold. I was not as handsome then as I am now, but younger and more energetic. I landed in Los Angeles on Wednesday at eleven o'clock a. m., on the fifth day of June, 1875. In those days there was being sung on the stages of the San Francisco theaters a song which should have been entitled "Flannigan's Jag." The first bar of it (I believe bar is the proper word, but if the word bar is offensive in Pasadena, maybe I had better say, *cafe*) was about as follows. I am going to sing it to you, and I want you to understand that I thoroughly pride myself on my ability as a musician. Like all geniuses, I sing entirely by ear. You would probably have discovered that fact yourselves, but I like to be entirely frank with my audience. But here is a little of that song: (Sings)

"Oi had fifteen dollars in my inside pocket,
Whin Oi got paid on Saturday noight.
Divil a cint had Oi on Sunday mornin'."

¶ When I landed in Los Angeles, I was worse off than Flannigan. I had eight lonely silver dollars

of an issue called "Trade Dollars," worth eighty-eight cents apiece, and "Divil a cint had I at sundown."

¶ The hackman who took me from the Commercial Street depot to the French restaurant in the Downey block extracted one of my dollars. When I engaged a room, the landlord demanded a deposit of five dollars as a badge of my respectability. Then I met one of my old schoolmates who was broke, and I gave him a dollar. The other dollar I spent in riotous living. I carried out Bob Ingersoll's injunction, "If you have a dollar to spend, spend it like a king," and I "blew" myself for the luxuries of the table. What good was one lone dollar anyhow? It was too lonesome to hoard, and too large to swallow; so I thought the sooner I was rid of it, the better for me. After my money was gone I felt dejected and lonesome. If I had had sufficient funds, I would have bought a ticket that day back to San Francisco and returned by the first boat. But Fate was kind to me. I had to remain, and gained an earthly paradise, while the community probably gained an undesirable citizen, not, however, "a malefactor of great wealth."

¶ That night, in my desperation, I wrote to my old employer, Paul Neumann, an attorney in San Francisco, asking him to hold the place in his office open for me, and to send me money enough to return on. Before I got his reply, I had seen Pasadena, and didn't want to return. When his letter came, it contained a check for $50.00. He said in the letter that he willingly sent me the check, as it simply increased his then very respectable and constantly increasing overdraft at his bank, but he knew that it would be paid, and I was welcome to it; that I was to cash it in, and return immediately, as he needed me. I followed his injunction in part

only, cashed the check and devoted the money to my present necessities, and wrote to him that it was inconvenient for me to return at that time. I want you to understand, however, that I paid him back the fifty dollars, as I have paid every debt I ever contracted in my life. Paul told me when I paid him that he was just that much ahead; that the measly bank had finally refused him further overdrafts and thrown out his account. With some vehemence he asserted that he never would pay any institution that treated him so shabbily. Nobody ever tried to collect anything forcibly from Neumann. It would have been as impossible to have collected a debt from him as it would be to get the price of a poll tax out of an ex-United States Senator. Please do not laugh at this, as it may hurt my friend Flint's feelings.

¶ Within a week after I landed in Los Angeles, I had more affection for this country than a Progressive Republican has for an office, and you couldn't have driven me away with a club and the promise of a salary twice as big as "Bob" Burdette's. I don't know how much the reverend gentleman is getting, but I do know that if he hadn't gotten started wrong in the world and become a Gospel sharp, that I could have put him on the Orpheum Circuit, and netted him one hundred thousand dollars per annum, which would have been going some even for "Bob."

¶ On the Sunday following my arrival, after attending church, I joined a new-made companion, Mr. Abe Haas, of the firm of Haas, Baruch and Company, on a horseback ride through Pasadena. He furnished the horses or I would have walked. It may be just as well for me to inform you how I made the acquaintance of Mr. Haas. The hackman who kidnapped me at the station was an

Irishman, named Hewitt. I asked him where was a good place for me to put up. "Well," he said, "all the bloods do be stayin' at the French Restaurant in the Downey Block. There be's Mr. Ben Trueman, Mr. Dan Freeman, Col. R. S. Baker, Mr. William Broderick, Mr. Fred Drakenfeld, Mr. William Pridham and Mr. Abe Haas—a pioneer merchant—they all be stayin' there." I thought that was good enough for me, and I told him to take me there. After securing a room and changing some of my apparel, I came down to luncheon. There were two dining-rooms. One a very large one for second-class trade, and one very small for first-class trade. In view of the plethoric condition of my finances, I naturally selected the first-class room.

¶ I took a seat at a small table. The room gradually filled up. Finally a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion came in, looked around, and I saw he was going to take the seat opposite me. My mind worked pretty rapidly. Said I to myself: Here's a funny go. The last man I spoke to in San Francisco was a Jew, named Louis Sloss, one of the finest men that ever lived, rich, powerful and influential. He was my friend. He actually came down to the steamer to see me off—me, a poor, miserable boy, starting out on a new voyage in life! Before we parted, he wished me all success, and putting his hand in his pocket he said, "Do you need any money? Have you got all the money you need?" I lied to him like a statesman, and felt the small store of silver that I had down in my trousers pocket sort of shrink up and then almost explode with laughter when I told him that I needed no money. These things ran through my mind rapidly, and I repeated to myself: The last man I spoke to in San Francisco was a Jew, and the first

man I am going to get acquainted with in Los Angeles is a Jew.

¶ About this time the stranger had taken his seat. I bowed to him. In those days I had the faculty of getting acquainted with anything; I could even get acquainted with a lamp-post in the darkest night imaginable, and soon he and I were chatting quite merrily. I asked him if he knew a pioneer merchant, Mr. Abe Haas. "I am Abe Haas," he replied. We became and still are firm friends. "We grew in beauty side by side." Somehow or other, I just naturally love a Jew. I studied law in San Francisco with Paul Neumann, who was one. When I got to practicing, my principal clients were Jews, and when I got through with them, their fortunes always looked like boarding-house doughnuts, the holes in them were so large. While attorney for the Los Angeles Board of Trade, I once helped run a boarding house for a short time, and I assure you that those moderate-sized doughnuts, served at boarding houses, are made with a large hole in the center, not for economical reasons, but it gives the doughnut a much more aesthetical appearance, and then it relieves it of some of its weight, and the ordinary individual can shift it on his plate without the aid of a derrick. In boarding houses we never throw away what is cut from the center of the doughnut. That is always saved and used in making sponge cake.

¶ My affection for the Jews was augmented by an incident in my early life. When quite a boy I was employed to assist in herding a flock of sheep. The herder-in-chief gave me two books, one the "Life of Josephus," and the other a "History of the Jews." From these books I got a great insight into the Jewish character. I would not recommend that any of you adopt the profession of sheep-herding

as a permanent occupation. Followed too long, it produces melancholy, and when one has herded sheep a sufficient length of time, he talks like a sheep. I had that peculiarity demonstrated to me once in trying a lawsuit. I put a witness on the stand. I said to him, "What is your name?" "Bla-a-a-a, Jacques Forges." "Where do you live?" "Bla-a-a-a, San Fernando." "What is your occupation? "Bla-a-a-a, sheep-herder." And when he left the stand, I thought he did so with a little jump, such as sheep take when suddenly startled, and if he had had a caudal appendage, I am sure he would have twisted it.

¶ I was discussing these books with my mother one day. By the way, my parents were Southern people, both from Kentucky. That accounts for my very strong desire for clean, clear, pure, mountain spring water, such as I am extracting from the southern limits of Pasadena and taking to my home in Alhambra. From my parents I also inherited a strong detestation for all intoxicating drinks. I have never used them. True, I drink as a beverage, not as a stimulant, Bourbon, Rye, Scotch (if I can't get anything else), Champagne and California Brandy. But those stronger, coarser drinks, which intoxicate and inebriate the people, which cause a husband to beat up his wife, like soda water, lemonade, and ginger ale, I never have been guilty of using. Beer I can drink in small quantities. I really feel no inconvenience from sixty or seventy glasses a day, but I shudder to think of the consequences were I to overindulge in that liquor!

¶ In discussing these books which the sheep-herder gave me, with my mother, in an unguarded moment I remarked to her that it was the one regret of my life that my mother had not been a Yankee woman and my father a Jew. You will see that I comb

my hair back above my forehead. That is to hide the scar. She was making blackberry pies at the time, and tapped me with the rolling pin. The last thing I remember was hearing her bemoan possessing an ungrateful child, with less pride of ancestry than a degenerate "jake mule." On coming to, I apologized to her for the remark, and said the desire to change my genealogical tree resulted solely from commercial considerations; that in my opinion the offspring of such a combination as I had mentioned ought to be able to beat the iceman, the tax collector, the female solicitor for a church fair, and even death.

¶ I have been taught all my life not to covet our neighbors' property, which I suppose would include their characteristics. There is one characteristic, or talent, of the Jewish race that I have always coveted, and I cannot help it, and that is their ability to talk with their hands and shoulders. I will wager that none of you know where this trait comes from. I am going to tell you, and not charge you a cent for it. The information shall be as free to you as salvation at a Methodist camp meeting. At the same time, when I have finished, I will ask Mr. Groenendyke to take up a collection. I do not want the money for myself, but I want to give it to the Good Government League to use in the Roosevelt campaign, as I understand that the Harvester Trust has gone into insolvency. Well, here is how they got it:

¶ In the good old days, when the Lord was kinder to his people than He is now, in cases of famine He fed them on showers of manna from heaven. One morning when a stricken tribe was indulging in this unpatented and unsterilized breakfast food, one old patriarch suddenly threw up his hands in this way (showing), saying to his followers: "Hold your

hands this way, and you will catch more manna." My friends, they have been catching the manna ever since, and if we don't look out they will get your manna and my manna in securing their own. It is well for us to have fun with the Jews. At the same time I consider them in many respects the greatest people in the world. Their home life is ideal. They control the finances of the world. None of them is a public charge, and they stack up in honesty favorably with the best of us.

¶ It is impossible for so unimaginative a person as myself to describe the country as I found it on the morning that Mr. Haas and I started on horseback for Pasadena. After leaving the Los Angeles River at River Station, there was no sign of an habitation for miles. At Sycamore Grove, now a portion of the Los Angeles city park system, a German picnic was in a wild state of enthusiasm. You will understand what that means if you ever attended one. There was music and dancing, and games and athletic sports, and beer—oh, mamma! such oodles of beer! Great foam-crested steins and zweiglasses with pretzels, and those little fat German sausages, three of them linked together, which always put me in mind of one of those extended dachshunds. There were slim maidens and fat dames, and small children and babes in arms, and old men and women,—and all of them were having such a good time as a temperance-loving citizen of Pasadena in his wildest jag on home-made lemonade never dreamed of. While this was a picnic of the German Verein, nearly every man, woman and child of Los Angeles was there. I met all of them, and from that day on I was fully acquainted with the city. We lingered at the picnic until well into the afternoon.

¶ After leaving Sycamore Grove, we encountered

no other buildings until we reached the crest of the hill, west of the present Raymond Hotel, except John Brenner's slaughter house, which stood on the bank of the Arroyo where Garvanza now stands. Mr. Haas took me to the top of the hill, now occupied by the Raymond Hotel. It was then a conical shaped hill of considerable height. The grading of it made one of Pasadena's citizens, Tom Banbury, a wealthy man. The contract for grading the site of the Raymond Hotel provided that all earth should be removed at one price, and all rock at another price. After scraping off the adobe, a stiff, dry, putty-like substance was encountered, which the architect held to be rock, and the grading contract ran up to forty thousand dollars. If Mr. Walter Raymond is present, he undoubtedly has a very distinct remembrance of this distressing fact.

¶ The Bible relates that Satan took our Saviour to the top of a mountain and tried to bribe him with a world which he did not own. Abe Haas took me to the top of this hill, and bribed me with the view that I got. He didn't offer to give me anything. I think that the instincts of his race prevented him from offering to give away anything, even that which he did not own.

¶ Pasadena herself was then a settlement, not a city. Only a short time before, a few years at best, the site of this magnificent city had been purchased by some people from the East. It was called the "Indiana Colony." Their purchase of the entire acreage was at the rate of $15.00 per acre. Dr. Griffin and Don Bonito Wilson made the sale. Dr. Griffin had negotiated the same. The property, like most of the property in the county, was mortgaged to the Farmers and Merchants Bank, and the deed was delivered to Mr. Isaias W. Hellman, who received the purchase money and satisfied the mort-

gage. He sent for Griffin and Wilson and divided the balance between them. Wilson upbraided Griffin for having swindled the Indiana people. "Why, Doctor," he said, "you robbed them, you robbed them! The price was an outrage!" Such were the ideas of land values here then. We reached the top of the hill as the evening shadows fell.

¶ On that delicious Sabbath afternoon, while the habitations of Pasadena were few and far between, her natural beauties were all there. Those grand old mountains back of us stood then just where they stand today, and were just as beautiful as they are today, clothed as they were in their purple haze, and untainted by contact with man, unscarred by cable or trolley tracks, astronomical observatories, trails or passes. In the immense valley between our position and the base of these mountains were the habitations and young orchards recently established by the hardy pioneers who had purchased this land. All of the country not so occupied was wild sagebrush land, or covered for miles and miles with poppy fields, radiant with color, even rivaling the sun, and to my fascinated gaze, seeming like one vast, golden, billowing ocean. The bronze hills and fertile plains stretched far off to the East and South, a perfect picture of peace and contentment.

¶ The same genial sun warmed the earth, the same gentle sea breeze tempered its heat then as it does today. The climate, which has made Pasadena famous as a resort for retired millionaires, was the same then as it is now, and it captured me. I went back from that ride satisfied, and I have been satisfied with this country ever since.

¶ It would be very hard for any of you to realize the condition of this country at that time. The population of Los Angeles was but 7000 souls. The

total registration of voters of Los Angeles County, which then included Orange County, for the state election in 1875 was but 2900. By the way, this would have been a good country for Bryan to have campaigned in, in those days. Out of a total vote of 2900, the average Democratic majority for the county ticket was about 1800.

¶ We had no direct railroad communication with the outer world, except the road leading from Los Angeles to Wilmington, where the steamers landed from San Francisco. The Southern Pacific was finished to San Fernando, but the San Fernando tunnel was in the course of construction. Anyone coming from San Francisco to Los Angeles, overland, came by rail to Caliente, by stage from Caliente to San Fernando, and by rail into the city. As you can well imagine, but few were venturesome enough to take this trip. Going East, the Southern Pacific, now running to New Orleans and connected with all the Eastern roads of the United States, had been built no farther than Spadra, a few miles this side of the present city of Pomona. With but 2900 voters, you can well imagine how few people lived in the various settlements throughout the county. Santa Monica had just been discovered. The country from there to San Pedro was devoted to sheep pasture. The great San Fernando Valley, including the Providencio and the San Rafael ranchos, was sheep pasture, and raw cactus and sagebrush land. Pasadena, embracing the San Pascual Rancho, was a wilderness of sagebrush, barring a few settlements, with a fringe of beautiful oaks along the banks of the Arroyo Seco, and on the Wilson and Stoneman lands from the Raymond Hotel site, east to the Chapman lands. Underneath these hills, south of us, were a few meager settlements, including General Stoneman's place, the Wilson and Shorb prop-

erty, the Luther Titus and L. J. Rose orange orchards and vineyards; Dr. Winston was still east, then Chapman and the Santa Anita Ranch, where Arcadia now stands. From there on, where Duarte, Azusa, Glendora, Covina, Lordsburg, Pomona, Upland and Cucamonga now boast thousands of inhabitants, was all open territory. El Monte and Downey were on the map, but South Pasadena, Alhambra, Whittier, Rivera, Ramona and Long Beach, and all of the towns on our southeast had never been dreamed of. H. D. Bacon owned 1200 acres under fence, embracing the Raymond Hotel site, most of South Pasadena, all of the Oneonta country, and extending as far south as the Alhambra road. It was divided by the Monterey road. On this 1200 acres there was but one house, the old adobe, which still stands beneath the hill in front of the Raymond.

¶ I have often been asked, "What has wrought this change?" My answer has always been the same, "Climate!" A few people wandered in here. They took on new life, new hopes. In letters, they described this paradise on earth to their Eastern friends. Others came. The fame of Pasadena and Southern California grew until we have evolved into what we now are.

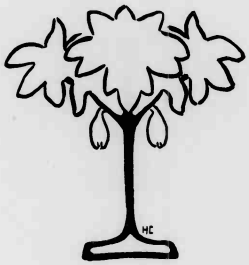
¶ I sometimes ask myself, "What of the future?" My answer, to my own satisfaction, is that the beginning has only been made. We have not yet scratched the surface. We do not know what congestion in population is. There will be more people to the acre in Pasadena, and all the other favorably situated localities in Southern California, than there are in France, provided always, this nation holds together, and I am sometimes in doubt of its stability. Class hatred, the spirit of unrest, the lack of reverence for our institutions, the spirit of defiance

to legalized authority, everywhere exhibited, must, unless curbed, result in the gravest abuses. History has its lessons. We cannot go on forever with capital and labor at war, with labor defying capital, and the great army of agitators preaching discord, without the gravest results. Pasadena will without doubt get her share of all the good things coming.

¶ I hope our land will long be spared the spectacle we are now witnessing of an ex-president of the nation and its present president, pursuing each other from state to state, and denouncing each other from the stump in a disgraceful manner. All decency has by them been thrown to the winds. Vituperation has taken the place of argument in this contest. Surely the moral standard of the nation has been severely jarred by this indecent contest, and I believe it would be a salutary lesson to future presidential candidates if the self-respecting people of the republic would relegate each of these gentlemen to the scrap heap.

¶ My hope for the future of this nation is that it will cultivate a more patriotic spirit. I hope that it will learn to love and respect the American flag—that emblem of liberty that cheered the falling spirits of Washington's starved and frozen army at Valley Forge; which was carried in triumph through the War of 1812; which led our enthusiastic forces to victory in the Mexican War; the flag of the brave defenders of the Union, who fought, bled and suffered for it in our civil conflict, from Bull Run to Appomattox, before Vicksburg, at Shiloh, at Gettysburg, at Fredericksburg, at Seven Pines, at the Battle of the Wilderness, at Antietam, before Richmond, and with Sherman from Atlanta to the Sea; the flag under which Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, and beneath whose inspiring stars and stripes Schley and Sampson sailed when

they wrought complete destruction to the Spanish war vessels which tried to sneak away from Santiago harbor; the flag around which all good and patriotic citizens of this fair land of ours have always been proud to rally.



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